

We're here tonight because as per the motion from Monday night, Clif and I met with the Clerk and Asst. Clerk and then the Treasurer separately. We reviewed what we proposed to change in the budget – it was a difficult conversation. Since this is a public meeting, I won't get into specific personnel related matters.

We have been working on the budget since October – even reviewing it line by-line on many occasions. We asked the office staff to prepare a proposal which they did early on in the process. There was some concern expressed by the Board about some of the salary line items and many discussions ensued but nothing formal was proposed until last Monday evening when the cutoff date was upon us. This left us very little opportunity to fully understand and digest the recent information as presented. I appreciate the effort but it would have been better addressed and presented much earlier on in the process giving us more time to evaluate the information.

I feel that the hourly rates that are increasing above the 2.7% reflect an adjustment based on the individuals in the positions and the added value they bring with them to the positions. We have a highly knowledgeable, professional and dedicated staff with years and years of experience. The Town Clerk is elected and the Assistant is appointed by the Clerk. The Clerks job duties and responsibilities are in statute. The Treasurer is an employee and when the position was filled we had a Selectboard Administrator. When the Selectboard Administrator left, the staff as a whole took on many/most of the job duties without complaint or question and without additional compensation.

Clif and I have been meeting with the office staff for months and months and months every Wednesday morning. I now have a much better understanding of how the office operates and at times understand the chaos and competing demands. While yes we are improving the phone system and implementing computer and program updates, COTTS, enhanced cyber security, improved IT support and other things to make their jobs more efficient a lot of this is what we need to do in the age of modern technology and to protect the Town and residents personal information and overall provides better services to the public.

We have worked to improve communication, trust, morale, and respect and created a team environment. These are the intangibles for which there is no price tag.

After the town report is put to bed, we need to discuss a plan to have for next year on how to improve the budget process. We should also review job descriptions/statute to make sure they are in line with the actual duties being performed.